

Garcia Mountain

CA-010-012

GARCIA MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-012)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 80 acres

The Garcia Mountain WSA is located in San Luis Obispo County adjacent to the United States Forest Service (USFS) Garcia Further Planning Area (recommended suitable for wilderness designation in the Los Padres National Forest's Final Land Management Plan). The WSA is approximately 25 miles east of San Luis Obispo and consists of two separate 40 acre parcels of BLM land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA extends from the border of the USFS Garcia Further Planning Area along each 40-acre parcel's eastern boundary only.

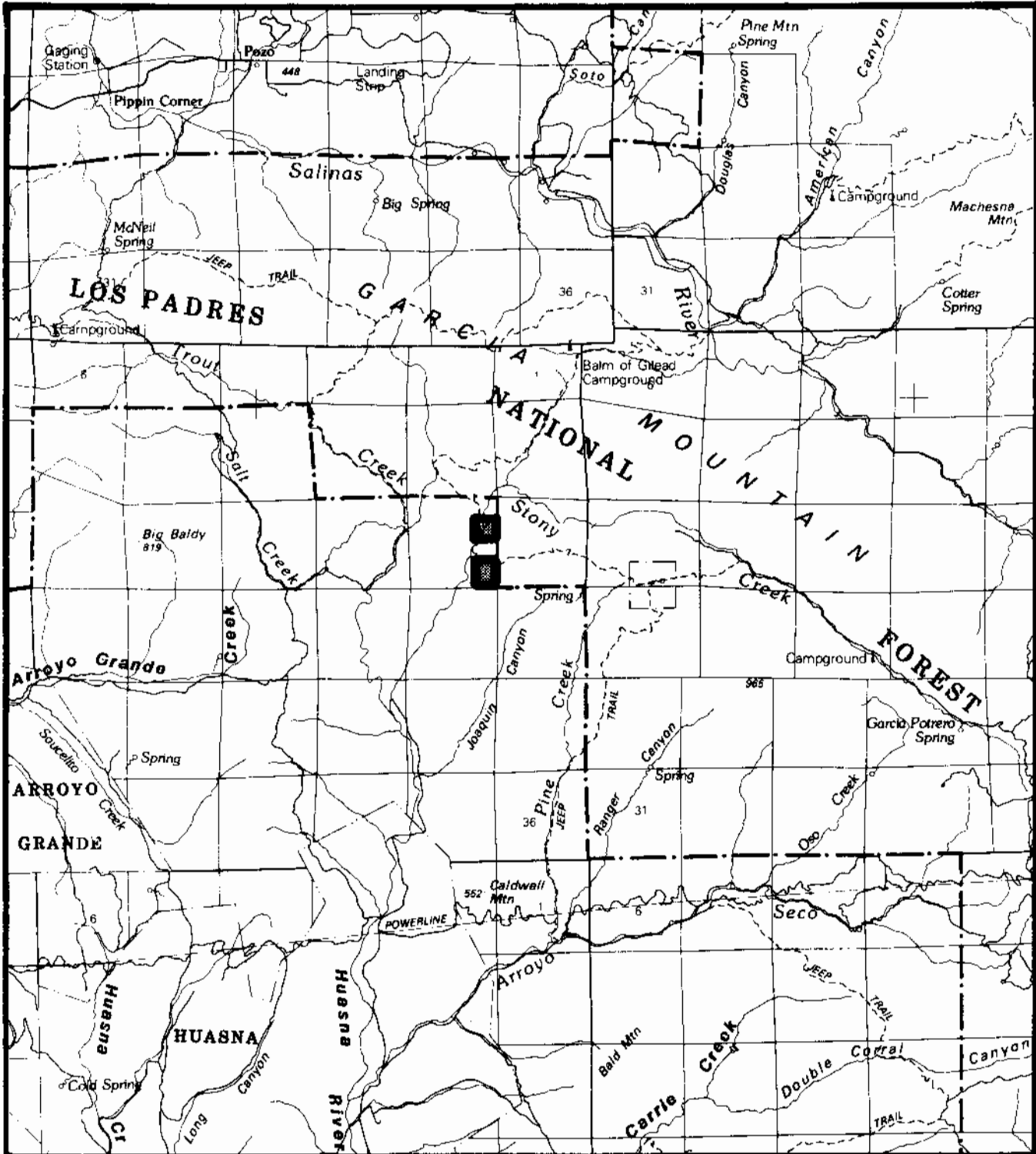
These small, isolated parcels have stands of blue oak along seasonal Stony Creek with some coast live oak on north facing slopes. Annual grasses are found beneath these stands of trees. Chaparral is mixed throughout these areas and is thickest high above the drainages.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended for wilderness
80 BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable for the following reasons: The wilderness values are not highly significant and the current management has proven effective in protecting the area's existing resources. The Los Padres National Forest has indicated that the lack of wilderness values and topographic continuity of the WSA adjacent to the USFS Garcia Mountain area which is recommended for wilderness, will not enhance their wilderness management of the area. In addition, the northern parcel in this WSA contains Forest Service Road No. 15E06 (actually a primitive jeep trail), which is closed to public motorized vehicle access. The WSA contains no special features.



R 31 W

R 32 W

R 31 W

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Garcia Mountain

Proposal

MAP-1

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In addition, managing these areas as wilderness would be extremely difficult. Frequent signing and patrols of the boundaries would be necessary.

With this non-suitable recommendation there is a one-half mile route of travel which will remain available for vehicular use.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	80
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		80
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	80
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		80

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The two small 40-acre parcels that make up this WSA generally retain their primeval character and influence, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable. The northernmost parcel has USFS Road No. 15E06 crossing it from north to south paralleling Stony Creek. This road does not show on the

USFS public maps and has been closed to vehicles. The road has not been maintained for years and resembles a primitive trail, thereby affecting the naturalness of the parcel very little. No structures or fences are known to exist in either parcel. No vegetation manipulation has taken place in this WSA.

2. Solitude: Opportunities for solitude in this WSA are limited due to its small size and boundary with private land on three sides (both 40-acre parcels border USFS land only on their east sides).

This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Very little opportunity for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are present; the northern parcel in this WSA contains Forest Service Road No. 15E06 which is closed to motorized vehicles and sees very little visitor use (an estimated 10 hunters per year pass through). The southern parcel has no physical access (trails) and is choked with thick vegetation. No use is projected.
4. Special features: The WSA contains no ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 80 acres of the California Chaparral/California Oakwoods ecosystem. Wilderness designation of this WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Chaparral/ California Oakwoods	4	105,301	6	39,648
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Chaparral/ California Oakwoods	4	105,301	6	39,648

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 15 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Salinas-Seaside-Monterey	24	3,676,896	45	644,415
San Francisco-Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: There are no other BLM WSAs within 50 air miles recommended for wilderness designation. The Santa Lucia and the Machesna Mountain Wilderness Areas are located approximately 10 miles and eight miles, respectively, northwest of the WSA. The San Rafael and Dick Smith Wilderness Areas are located 35 and 40 miles, respectively, to the south of the WSA. All areas mentioned are managed by the Los Padres National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Garcia Mountain WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with difficulty. Manageability problems include the small size and the lack of topographic continuity of the two units with the USFS area recommended for wilderness. Frequent signing of the borders would be required to insure the integrity of the units.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The geology and mineral resources of the Garcia Mountain WSA are described in the USFS 1988 Final EIS, Land and Resource Management Plan, Los Padres National Forest AMS - Minerals Addendum and in a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Miscellaneous Field Studies Map (MF-1655-B), "Mineral Resource Potential Map of the Roadless Areas and the Santa Lucia Wilderness in the Los Padres National Forest, Southwestern California". The mineral resource data in the Affected Environment Section of the 1988 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was taken largely from these sources, covering adjacent USFS administered lands. The BLM EIS indicates that the WSA has a low potential for the occurrence of oil and gas. The WSA is in the Coast Range geomorphic province and is composed primarily of interbedded Cretaceous marine sandstones and shales. The area is characterized by northwest trending folds and faults, roughly paralleling the mountain ranges.

Wildcat drilling for oil and gas occurred in an area five to ten miles to the south and southwest of the WSA from 1929 to 1983. About 50 holes were drilled, but none are currently producing. All the drilling was in Miocene sedimentary rocks. The WSA is also separated from the wildcat area by the East Huasna Fault Zone (Dibble, 1981, Geologic Map of the Caldwell Mesa Quadrangle, unpublished preliminary draft, USGS).

BLM records dated March 25, 1988, showed no unpatented mining claims, mineral leases or mineral material sales contracts/permits within this WSA.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. As of May, 1988, no new mineral resource information concerning this WSA has been generated.

Because of the low potential for the occurrence of mineral resources, no mineral potential map was prepared for this document.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the California Section 202 Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Non-designation of the WSA as wilderness will not result in any anticipated impacts to the wilderness values. There are no management actions projected that will result in a loss of wilderness values and the perception of naturalness will be maintained. Potential fire suppression activities as a result of wildfires could lead to short-term impacts to the perception of naturalness.	Wilderness designation of the Garcia Mountain WSA would result in a slight positive benefit. Long-term protection from unanticipated future actions that could result in potential adverse impacts would be provided.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the wilderness inventory phase, one comment addressed the inventory unit's potential for oil and gas development.

During the study phase, a public hearing was held in Bakersfield, California, and written comments were accepted until February 15, 1988. The majority of the comments received supported the all-wilderness alternative for this unit.

No Federal, State or County agency comments were received specific to the WSA.